CARITAS ORANS

A DRAMA IN FOUR SCENES

Written for the

Pupils of St. Michael's Academy

CHATHAM, N. B.

by

SACERDOS.

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THE GLOUCESTER NORTHERN LIGHT

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FRANCESCA

CHARACTERS

Lady Frances, *St. Frances of Rome*

Lady Mobilia, *Daughter-in-law of St. Frances*

Archangel, *Guardian Angel of St. Frances*

Evangelista, *Son of St. Frances, in Heaven (about 9 yrs. old)*

Laura and Emilia, *Beggar Children in Rome*

Servants, *Lady Mobilia's Attendant*

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SCENE I.

(Lady Frances discovered kneeling before her oratory)

(N. B.) "From that time forward Frances never wore any other gown than one of coarse dark green cloth."

(Lady Frances discovered kneeling before her oratory)

Oh happy Evangelista, son of my heart! A year has passed since you left your earthly home to be the companion of angels, and to rest at the feet of Jesus. My mother-heart may not forget you, my dear one, but I thank God who has taken you to Himself. Oft during the course of your short life on earth was I cheered by your tender affection and encouraged by the sight of your wondrous virtue—and yet I feared for you amid the many temptations and trials of this wicked world. But now you are safe and happy in the bosom of God, and my soul rejoices in this consoling thought. Blessed be the name of the Lord for He hath given and He hath taken away!

Enter vison of Evangelista and Archangel. Francesca's lips move, but in vain she seeks to articulate—the joy and the terror of that moment are too intense. Her son draws near to her, and with angelic expression of love and respect, he bows down his head and salutes her. Then the mother's feeling predominate. She forgets everything save his presence and opens her arms to him, but it is no earthly form she encloses within them, and the glorified body escapes her grasp. And now she gains courage and addresses him in broken accents indeed, but with trembling eagerness. (Soft low music as vision enters)

Lady Frances Is it indeed you, my Son? Why do you come? Angel of God, have you thought of your mother —of your poor father? Amidst the joys of Paradise, have you remembered earth and its sorrows?

Evangelista (Looking to Heaven with an utterable expression of peace and joy; and then fixing his eyes on his mother)

Mother loved, I come from God. My abode

is with Him. My companions are the angels. Our sole occupation is the contemplation of the Divine perfection —the endless source of happiness. Eternally united with God, we have no will but His, and our peace is as complete as our souls may experience. God Himself is our joy, and that joy knows no limits.

Lady Frances Tell me, my son,—if you are permitted to make known your state to mortals—what place you hold 'midst God's holy Angels?

Evangelista Learn, my mother, that God of His great goodness, has appointed me to the second choir of Angels, and the first hierarchy of Archangels. This, my companion, is higher than I in rank, as he is more bright and fair in aspect. The Divine Majesty has assigned him to you as a Guardian during the remainder of your earthly pilgrimage; and to announce these tidings to you, is the object of my visit to-day. He will be visible to your eyes alone, and not to those of other mortals. Night and day, by your side, he will assist you in every way. Follow implicitly his guidance, for God has permitted that you will soon be most sorely tried. Be of good cheer, however, my mother, all things turn to the good of those who love God. And now, farewell sweet mother, until that blessed day when we shall meet again in the Divine presence. *(Exit)*

Lady Frances O Blessed Vision! How my heart burns with love and joy! Even in my fondest dreams, never could I picture my Evangelista so beautiful and so happy. How glorious indeed must be the mansions of the just! My Jesus, how I long to be with Thee, and to behold Thy Divinity with the clear eyes of my soul! When, oh when wilt Thou take me to Thy bosom, to dwell with Thee in the happiness of Heaven forever!

(Bowing profoundly to the Archangel) Holy Archangel, whom God has sent to be my visible companion and protector upon earth, receive into Thy spotless hands and offer up to God my poor but earnest expressions of gratitude to the Most High, for thus favoring a wretched sinning mortal, and do thou aid me with Thy guidance, that I may learn to walk in the way of the Lord. Teach me to bear with love and resignation any trial it may please Divine Providence to send me.

Archangel *(Laying hands on Frances' head)* Take courage, my daughter. Fear not the snares of Satan. My Master has sent me to protect you. Raise your heart ever in humble prayer, and trials will not separate you from Him. *(Both remain in this attitude until curtain falls)*

CURTAIN

SCENE II.

A Street in Rome.

(Enter Laura and Emilia)

Emilia *(Weeping)* Oh Laura, I am so tired and hungry. I cannot go any further.

Laura Dear little Emilia, only a little longer. Mamma, before she died, always told us that God would watch over us.

Emilia Do you really think He will help us? He seems so far away!

Laura He is always with us and will surely help us. Let us pray to Him again.

Both *(Kneeling)* Our Father, etc.—give us this day our daily bread.

(Perceive Lady Frances carrying a load of faggots)

(*Archangel*)

Lady Frances (*Aside*) Beloved children of the poor praying to their heavenly Father. Grant me, sweet Jesus, to imitate their faith and purity of heart.

(*To the Children*) Happy are those who pray with faith in the goodness and mercy of God. He is ever delighted with such petitions.

Laura Emily, it is the Lady Frances, the helper of the poor. (*To Frances*) Noble lady, God has already heard our prayer, since you have come to help us.

Lady Frances Thank Him then, dear children, since He has heard you. But how can I help you?

Laura We are tired and hungry, and have nothing to eat.

Lady Frances Poor little ones, come with me, and your wants shall be attended to.

(*Enter Lady Mobilia and attendant*)

Lady Mobilia Is this really the Lady Frances, attired in beggar's garb, and laden like a slave! How comes it, Frances, I find you thus, and in the company of beggars?

Lady Frances Our dear Lord, Mobilia, bore an ignominious cross through the streets of Jerusalem, and the children of the poor were special objects of His tenderness and love.

Lady Mobilia But you forget your rank, your relations and friends! The whole world will sneer at such masquerading! How can we ever look our friends in the face! They will point with ridicule and scorn at the rich and noble Lady Frances, dressed as the meanest of the city's mendicants. Surely God does not require that

you disgrace us in this manner? I am shocked to meet my husband's mother in such a guise!

Lady Frances We are taught by Holy Scripture, dearest daughter, to be poor in spirit, no matter what our rank may be; and our Divine Saviour, who was the King of Kings, trod this earth as the most lowly of all. Shall I, then, who am so great a sinner in His sight, clothe myself with riches and jewels, and be not afraid of incurring His most dreadful punishments?

Lady Mobilia Enough, babbler! For my part, I intend to enjoy life while I can, and shall not embitter my soul with dismal croakings of a future punishment. You have chosen to be of the people, I prefer to remain a noble and to associate with nobles. On entering your family circle, I was prepared to love you, but my tastes do not incline to *Beggars,* (*scornfully*), and I begin to despise you for your erratic conduct.

Servant (*Offering to take the load of faggots from Lady Frances*) Permit me, dear Mistress, to bear this heavy burden for you.

Lady Mobilia Back, menial, and know your place! Shall I pass through the streets of Rome unattended because you desire to help a beggar! (*To Lady Frances*) Frances, for I will not call you Mother, in future when you indulge your taste for such low company, I prefer not to be recognized as your relative. (*To Servant*) Come, we must not stay longer, lest I be seen by some of my friends. (*Exeunt*)

Lady Frances (*Aside*) It is the beginning of my trial. My Jesus, give me strength to bear it..... Though you love me not, my daughter, my heart yearns for you, and my petition will ascend to the throne of the Most

High, that He may open your eyes to the vanity of earthly wealth and pleasure. False spirit of the world, condemned by Jesus when on earth, thou art always the same in thy vain delusions! How oft hast thou led thy votaries to their own undoing. (*To the Children*) Come, children, I will relieve your distress, only asking you in return to beseech our loving Father, who has so quickly answered your prayer for bread, to grant unto a starving soul, that bread which gives life everlasting.

CURTAIN

SCENE III.

(*Lady Frances kneeling before her oratory*)

Lady Frances (*Kneeling*) Oh my God! Thou hast indeed tried my mother-heart. Sweet little Agnes! Thou too hast flown from thy Mother's bosom, to join thy angel brother.....O my God, my poor heart bleeds beneath Thy chastening touch, but bruised and torn I offer it to Thee! Yet more if Thou wilt. Take all that I am, all that I have; but may I not ask something in return? O Thou who by a look did'st change the heart of Peter, and did'st cause the bitter tears to flow in torrents from his sorrowing eyes, look with love and mercy upon her whom Thou hast given to me to cherish as a daughter. Her soul is wandering in its pride and vanity, far from Thee. Recall her to Thy ways. O God, listen to the prayer of my poor heart, and in Thy love and mercy, send the beams of Thy divine light into the blinded eyes of her soul.

Archangel (*Approaching*) Grieve not, Francesca, thy prayers have been favorably received by the Most High and thy trial is about to end. Thy prayers and sacrifices have vanquished Satan, and the mercy of God

will be extended to her whom thou lovest. Even now the hour has come.

(*Enter Lady Mobilia*)

Lady Mobilia (*With deep sarcasm, then anger*) Ah, behold once more our saint! For what do you petition now, most virtuous one!....That one of your blind beggars may recover his sight, and you receive credit for having worked the miracle? Ha! This hypocrisy wearies me! Is it not sufficient for you, Frances, to spend the greater part of your time mumbling prayers like some foolish ecstatic? Doth not even a beggar's garb and beggar's company content you? No, you must proceed to the utmost limit! Lady Maria has informed me that you were seen yesterday at the portal of the Church of San Lorenzo, receiving money like any common beggar.

Lady Frances It is true, Mobilia, I was there and begged.

Lady Mobilia And therefore must I bear the taunts and sarcasm of those who witnessed the sight! Have you lost all sense of what is proper? Do you no longer care what the world may say of you and of us?

Lady Frances Alas, my daughter, I fear that human respect is still but too deeply rooted in my soul, and hence I will seek even more frequent occasions of humbling myself before God and man.

Lady Mobilia And I shall help you in your work of humility; for until you cease your foolish vagaries, they will be to me as they are to all my friends, a subject of scorn and ridicule! And furthermore, I will appeal if need be, to my husband and to yours to use their authority in putting an end to your intolerable conduct.

Lady Frances My husband and my son love me too well,

Mobilia, to expose me to the loss of my immortal soul.

Lady Mobilia What! Would you insinuate that I should appeal in vain to my husband? Yes, you have diabolic cunning enough to try to rob me of his affections; but if you attempt that, Frances, I will call down upon you the vengeance of Heaven! Hypocrite that you are. I will— (*Screams and falls on couch*)

Lady Frances My child, what ails you!

Lady Mobilia My heart is bursting—my head burning—my limbs are filled with shooting pains—all strength has left my body—What is it! What is it! Surely it is not death. O, help me Frances—Oh God, I am dying!

Lady Frances (*With great concern*) My daughter—O Mobilia, not dying surely—and no one at hand to help— (*rings bell*) My Jesus, mercy! Take pity on her soul, and summon it not before Thy dread tribunal in this moment of her pride and anger. Oh Jesus, sweet Saviour, hear my prayer.

Archangel Fear not, Frances, she will not die. The hand of God is here, fear not.

(*Enter Servant hurriedly*)

Servant Did Lady Frances ring? Why, what is the matter! Lady Mobilia ill! Unconscious! Shall I call a priest?

Lady Frances No, wait, she will not die. See, already she is better. Bring me the little vial you will find on the table in the adjoining room. (*Servant goes out and returns with vial. Frances pours out a potion and presents to Mobilia* ..Mobilia, dear, take this.....Now rest a while and you will soon be yourself again. (*To servant*) Please leave me

with her, Benigna. (*Exit servant*)

(*Lady Frances, kneeling by Mobilia bows her head in prayer. The angel advances, and Lady Mobilia perceives him*)

Archangel (*Severely*) You have sinned Mobilia, by your treatment of this saintly woman, who has shown you nothing but love and kindness. You have thus offended your Creator. Behold, the pains you now feel are as those of hell. The flames that consume you are the false and contemptuous words you have used in anger. Realize, now, how great your sin has been, and ask pardon of your merciful Saviour.

Lady Mobilia (*Writhing with pain*) I burn! I burn! Oh the agonizing pain.....I have sinned! I have sinned! Pardon me, my God! By Thine infinite love for me, pardon me. (*Becomes somewhat quieter*)

Lady Frances My God and my Lord, how can I thank Thee who hast turned her heart to Thee in sorrow for her faults. (*To Mobilia*) There, there, daughter dear, God will certainly hear your prayer for pardon. He never refuses the humble and contrite heart. See, your trouble is passing away. You have become much easier.

Lady Mobilia Yes, my Mother, when I cried for pardon, the bonds of hell that seemed to surround me, burst asunder and the dreadful pain has diminished. Oh Mother, let me cling to you, for I have had a dreadful vision. I beheld a bright and glorious angel, but he cast upon me a terrible look of anger, and told me that the pains I endured were as those of hell and a just punishment for my past conduct. He bade me ask pardon of my merciful Saviour.

Lady Frances And He has granted it to you. Be brave, my darling, your pains will soon cease.

Lady Mobilia They will cease, dear Mother, if you ask it of God, but I have deserved even greater—Oh wretch that I was. (*Sobs bitterly*)

Lady Frances Calm yourself, my child. God is all merciful.

Lady Mobilia Oh Mother, if my life is spared your daughter will be to you the most loving, the most obedient of hand-maids. Forgive me for the past, dear Mother and pray for me.

Lady Frances (*Prays*) Divine Son of God, who by Thy sacred touch healed the blind, the lame and the sick, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and relieve the suffering form before Thee. Thou hast said that one grain of faith is sufficient to move mountains. I believe, my Jesus, help my unbelief.

Archangel The Son of God hath not turned a deaf ear to thy petition, Frances. Thy faith will make her whole. (*Approaching, touches Mobilia, who is immediately cured*)

Lady Mobilia (*Starting up*) Oh Mother, I am cured!

Lady Frances Oh joy untold! (*Rises and seats herself near her on couch*)

Lady Mobilia The same bright Angel of God appeared to me, and touched me with his hand. Immediately all pain left me!

Lady Frances Thank God for all His mercies.

Lady Mobilia With all my heart I thank Him Who has enlightened my soul and cured my body. My whole life will not be long enough to prove my gratitude to Him, and my newly-found love for you, my mother. But can you forgive me, Mother.

Lady Frances Let us not speak of forgiveness now, my

child. Your heart is naturally good and noble, your impulses generous; but you have crushed them 'neath a fatal infatuation for the world and its glittering pleasures. Unfettered now, your soul will find in God the happiness it has vainly sought in creatures.

CURTAIN

SCENE IV.

(*Lady Mobilia seated sewing*)

Lady Mobilia How different my life is now! What a change from the turmoil and unhappiness of the past. God bless thee, Mother, for having taught me the joy there is in lessening the sorrow of others. Never could I have imagined such sweetness hidden under self-sacrifice. Taste and see that the Lord is sweet—Ah! I have tasted.....and it *is* sweet.....Oh blessed Peace!

Lady Frances (*Entering unperceived by Mobilia*) Good morning Mobilia! Is it real, or only mental, the vision that brings that smile of peace?

Lady Mobilia (*Rising*) Ah Mother dearest, you have surprised me again in my old failing. But you cannot chide me this time, because it was partly a dream of your own dear self. But what means the halo of unusual joy and happiness that beams on *your* countenance? Methinks *yours* some heavenly vision.

Lady Frances Nay, child, not so.....

Lady Mobilia But you can have no secrets from me now, Mother dear. Share with me your new joy. Come, speak to me as only you know how of the love of our Divine Saviour and of His infinite compassion for sinners. (*Places seats for Lady Frances and seats herself at her feet*)

Lady Frances I thank you, my daughter. Your love and kindness are sweet to my soul. No holier discourse may proceed from lips of mortals than the praises of Divine Love; and no better disposition for the reception of my news—my new joy—than a heart turned in charity towards its Saviour.

Lady Mobilia And what may be your news, my lady mother? Have you discovered another orphan in need of your maternal care?

Lady Frances Not so, my daughter, though such abound. But I should wish to recall to you a day, the remembrance of which, however painful, must necessarily be of the greatest consolation to you.

Lady Mobilia It is the day on which the arm of Divine Mercy, outstretched towards me, drew me from the abyss of Hell.

Lady Frances Even so, my daughter....The day when God enlightened you that you might see the vanity of earthly pride and pleasure.

Lady Mobilia And filled my heart with new love for Him, and a desire to consecrate myself to His service.

Lady Frances Then can you the more easily understand my desire. Listen, daughter. From earliest childhood the dream of my life has been to give myself to God in religion. He willed otherwise, however, and ordered me, through my director and my parents, to remain in the world, though my heart was not of it. For more than twenty years, my husband and my family claimed my love and service; but now, Mobilia, all are safe in Heaven excepting you and Baptista, your husband. The voice of God now calls me to His service.

Lady Mobilia (*Starting up in affright*) Oh Mother—

Lady Frances (*Continuing*)—and even at this eleventh hour, my life's dream is to be fulfilled.

Lady Mobilia And will you leave me?

Lady Frances I must my daughter.

Lady Mobilia Oh Mother, Mother!

Lady Frances Today I go to beg admittance into the newly founded order of the Oblates.

Lady Mobilia But Mother... dearest Mother....what shall I do without you! You are my only stay, my strength, my consolation. Who will correct me when I fail, who strengthen me when I am weak.

Lady Frances Mobilia, there is one above Who will be your support and consolation. With His grace, He will strengthen and protect you in your weakness.

Lady Mobilia Oh I cannot, I *will* not let you leave me. If you retire from the world, I will go with you.

Lady Frances Nay, my child, consider. He speaks to both of us. To me He says "Come, my daughter, I am waiting for thee". To you, He says, "Stay, my child, and comfort your husband and family." Shall we not both hear His voice and do His Sacred Will?

Lady Mobilia Must I lose you!

Lady Frances Yes, Mobilia dear.

Lady Mobilia I, that has so lately found my Mother!

Lady Frances Even so, my child.

Lady Mobilia It is so hard!

Lady Frances But it will please God, Mobilia.

Lady Mobilia I love you so much, my mother!

Lady Frances But you love God better, my child.

Lady Mobilia How can I ever bear the separation?

Lady Frances He Who tells us to bring our griefs and burdens to His feet, He will console you, Mobilia. And remember that I shall not be wholly lost to you, nor you to me. We shall be ever together in spirit and prayer during the short years allotted to us. You will outlive me; but may we not hope to meet again forever in God's eternal presence! Now, my daughter, be generous, and, with the love of God in your heart, accept this cross willingly and say, after me "Thy will be done!"

Mobilia (*After a short pause, clasping her hands and looking to Heaven*) Thy Will be done!

Lady Frances And now, Mobilia, farewell—

Lady Mobilia Farewell, my dearest, most beloved Mother. But before you go, bless your daughter; forgive and pray for your erring child.

Lady Frances (*Placing her hand on Mobilia's head*) May God and His holy Mother bless and protect you and, keeping you ever in the path of virtue, lead you upwards to the heights of God's eternal Love!

(*Lady Mobilia covers her face with her hands. The Archangel taking Lady Frances by the hand leads her from the stage as the curtain falls*)

END.

DRAMAS

By SACERDOS.

CARITAS ORANS, (from the life of St. Frances of Rome). For Girls only. Seven Characters.

CARITAS VICTRIX, (from the life of St. Catherine of Sienna) For Girls only. Eight Characters

CARITAS CORONATA (from Fabiola).
For boys only. Eight or more Characters.

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DEUS EST CARITAS. A Sacred Cantata.
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The Dramas for boys were written for children of about twelve years, but may also be adapted to suit older boys.

St. Michael's Academy,
Chatham, N. B.